



COMDTINST 1000.1A

Jun 17 2005

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1000.1A

Subj: TATTOO, BODY MARKING, BODY PIERCING, AND MUTILATION POLICY

Ref: (a) Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST M1020.6 (series)
(b) Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1 (series)

1. **PURPOSE.** This Instruction amends the Coast Guard's Tattoo and Body Markings Policy to include both new accessions and current active duty/reserve members, and establishes new guidelines governing content, location, and amount of body coverage. Additionally, this policy reinforces the prohibition against other forms of intentional body mutilation.
2. **ACTION.** Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Judge Advocate General, and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction. Commander, Coast Guard Recruiting Command (CGRC) shall ensure compliance with this policy for all enlisted and officer accessions other than the Coast Guard Academy; CGRC is the final approving authority for all accession tattoo issues other than those on cadets and shall note any such approval on a CG Form 3307 prior to applicant's arrival at the accession point. The Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy shall ensure compliance with this policy for all cadets. Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Training Center Cape May shall annotate recruit records as appropriate. Commandant (CG-122) shall be the final authority for determinations involving the acceptability of tattoos/brands on personnel being considered for discharge and for any other cases in which there are questions concerning applicability of this Instruction. Internet release authorized.
3. **DIRECTIVES AFFECTED.** Tattoo and Body Markings Policy for Coast Guard Accessions, COMDTINST 1000.1, is cancelled. The following instructions will be amended to reflect this policy: Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST M1020.6 (series); Coast Guard Recruiting Manual, COMDTINST M1100.2 (series); and the Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series).
4. **BACKGROUND.** Our current policy on tattoos, branding, piercing, and other forms of body art has not changed appreciably over the past thirty years. Our standards date back to a time when tattooing was restricted to a very small portion of society, branding was almost unheard of, and piercing was

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No. 143

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
B				1																						
C			1	1			1		1											1		1	1	1	1	1
D	1	1																								
E								1		1	1	1	1													
F																	1	1	1							
G			1	1	1																					
H																										

NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION: None

limited to earlobes. Consequently, there was little practical need to spell out, in great detail, the do's and don'ts of body art. Clearly, times have changed. Tattooing has exploded in popularity and now touches all segments of our society. While branding remains far less popular, it is common in some social circles. As for piercing, one only needs to walk through the shopping mall or along the beach to see how much things have changed over the course of the last decade or so. These trends have gradually eased their way into our military workforce. However, given our role as a military service and as a federal law enforcement agency along with our level of daily contact with the general public, we cannot allow ourselves to be guided solely by social trends and fashion. Therefore, the time has come to recalibrate and affirm our standards for tattoos, branding, piercing, and other forms of body art that are consistent with the requirement to maintain a sharp, professional military image to the public we serve. Our intent is not to draw undue attention to members of our team who already have tattoos or brands. Where appropriate, we have incorporated a grandfathering feature into certain aspects of the new policy that will apply to all current members for the remainder of their careers. Heavy tattooing found its way into our organization over time. It will take time to ease our way back to a more desirable state.

5. POLICY.

- a. Location. No tattoo or brand, of any type, is authorized on the head, face, neck, or hands. The dark blue Coast Guard T-shirt collar shall be the reference point for the back and sides of the neck; i.e., no tattoo or brand may be visible above the collar of the T-shirt on the neck. In the case of a tattoo or brand very near the collarbone, a final evaluation shall be made to ensure that no tattoo or brand is visible when wearing a v-neck undershirt and an open collar shirt. The wrist bone shall be the reference point for tattoos or brands on the hands. No tattoos or brands shall be visible below the wrist bone.
- b. Content. Tattoos or brands anywhere on the body that promote racism/discrimination, indecency, extremist or supremacist philosophies, lawlessness, violence, or sexually explicit material are prohibited.
 - (1) Racist or discriminatory tattoos or brands are those that advocate the degradation of a person based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or gender.
 - (2) Indecent or sexually explicit tattoos or brands are those that contain a visual image, the dominant theme of which depicts or promotes graphic nudity, including sexual activities or organs, in a lustful way. Tattoos featuring fully exposed nudity are prohibited.
 - (3) Extremist tattoos or brands are those that depict or promote extremist activities or organizations that advocate hatred, intolerance, or lawlessness (e.g., terrorist groups, neo-Nazis, skinheads, outlaw gangs, Confederate Flag, extreme political organizations with violent histories). Because some extremist/criminal groups and organizations exploit popular symbols (e.g., cartoon characters), care must be taken in evaluating such tattoos or brands so as not to implicate members who may have selected the tattoo or brand based on its artistic value rather than a hidden meaning. In these cases, a determination will be made based on the totality of thematic elements expressed by tattoos or brands elsewhere on the body.

- (4) Tattoos or brands labeled violent or promoting lawlessness are those that depict extreme graphic violence, profanity, glorifications of drug culture, or markings that can reasonably be interpreted as anti-government in nature.
- c. Size or Coverage of Area. Excessive tattooing or branding is defined as that which results in more than 25% of an exposed limb (arm/leg) being adorned, and is not authorized. The exposed area shall be regarded as the zone between the member's elbow and wrist or the knee and the ankle. A complex tattoo (mural, serpentine, etc.) that dominates a given area shall be regarded as full coverage for the purpose of determining excessiveness, regardless of any un-tattooed area within the larger picture. Coverage shall be determined by visual approximation. The measuring of individual limbs is not intended or desired. In the case of branding, no more than one brand, not to exceed 4" x 4", may appear anywhere on the body.
- d. Body Piercing. No piercing, other than those for earrings as described below, shall be made through the ear, nose, tongue, chin, eyebrow, or any other body part that would be visible while in any uniform. This prohibition applies to male and female members alike and is specifically intended to limit the less than military appearance associated with vacant holes in the face and other exposed areas of the body. Other piercing concealed by the uniform (such as navel and nipples) are strongly discouraged due to the potential for infection and medical complications. Under no circumstance shall such concealed piercing and accompanying jewelry be visible through, or interfere with, the professional appearance of the member in uniform, nor shall such jewelry be visible while onboard a Coast Guard unit. Piercing in the ear shall not exceed two per ear lobe and shall be small and inconspicuous. Additional piercing in the ear lobes and cartilage are prohibited. Guidance regarding the wearing of earrings by women while in uniform, can be found in Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST M1020.6 (series). All members are prohibited from wearing forms of facial jewelry (other than earrings for women) while in uniform, on board a military installation, or while attending a command sponsored event. Those personnel with preexisting unauthorized piercing shall discontinue the use of those piercing to allow for eventual healing. Questionable cases should be referred to Commandant (CG-122) for final determination.
- d. Body Mutilation or Modification. Other forms of intentional body mutilation or modification (e.g. scarring, excessive ear piercing/stretching, tongue splitting, beneath the skin decorative implants, decorative tooth plating/engraving, etc.) are not authorized. This does not include traditional elective medical procedures (e.g., teeth straightening, breast augmentation, cosmetic plastic surgery, etc.).
- e. Disqualifying Tattoos, Brands, Piercings, or Mutilations. Applicants for enlistment or appointment with prohibited tattoos, brands, or mutilations described in paragraph 5.a. to 5.e. shall not be permitted to join the Coast Guard or Coast Guard Reserve. Initially unqualified applicants who choose to either alter or remove a disqualifying tattoo, brand, or mutilation may be reconsidered at a later date, provided they remain qualified in all other respects. However, no commitment shall be made suggesting that the removal or alteration of a tattoo or brand will ensure Coast Guard acceptance. Applicants with excess piercings that do not rise to the level of mutilation, shall be given the option of discontinuing the use of the unauthorized piercings throughout their Coast Guard service.

- f. Current Member Violations. Current active and reserve members whose tattoos or brands are determined to violate this Instruction shall be given the opportunity to seek competent medical advice regarding the removal or alteration of the disqualifying tattoo or brand. Members who refuse to take the necessary steps to satisfy the requirements of this policy shall be separated from the service. Current active, reserve, and delayed enlistment personnel with excessive tattooing or branding on exposed limbs, including on the hands, prior to the date of this Instruction shall be "grandfathered" indefinitely, and are prohibited from getting additional tattoos or branding in the exposed area(s) already determined to be excessive. These cases shall be documented using an Administrative Remarks, Form CG-3307, in accordance with the sample provided in enclosure (1). Tattoos or branding that are prohibited by paragraph 5.a. or 5.b. are not grandfathered. Similar documentation may be appropriate for preexisting tattoos/brands whose content requires a judgment call. This paragraph is specifically not intended to promote a service-wide inspection or evaluation of tattoos. Rather, it is intended to promote, when appropriate, an initial determination by a competent command authority, to preclude repeated reevaluation by future commands. Members who have tattoos or brands are encouraged to request their unit commander document grandfathered tattoos or brands by a Form CG-3307.
6. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of the directive and have been determined to be not applicable.
7. FORMS AVAILABILITY. Administrative Remarks, CG 3307, and Tattoo Screening Form, CG-6052 (1-05) are available in USCG Electronic Forms or on the Internet at <http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/forms1/welcome.htm> or the Intranet at <http://cgweb.uscg.mil/g-c/g-ccs/g-cit/g-cim/forms1/main.asp>. The Tattoo Screening Form, CG-6052 (1-05) is also attached to this Instruction as Enclosure (4).

K. T. VENUTO /s/
Assistant Commandant for Human Resources

- Encl: (1) Administrative Remarks, Sample CG-3307 for Preexisting Excessive Tattooing
(2) Administrative Remarks, Sample CG-3307 for Tattoo/Branding Content
(3) Administrative Remarks, Sample CG-3307 for Tattoo/Brand on Head, Face, Neck or Hands
(4) Tattoo Screening Form, CG-6052 (1-05)
(5) Samples of Disqualifying Markings

Sample CG-3307 for Preexisting Excessive Tattooing/Branding

Entry Type: Performance and Discipline (P&D – 34)
Reference: Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A
Responsible Level: Unit
Entry:

(DATE): In accordance with COMDTINST 1000.1A, tattoos/brands that cover more than 25% of an exposed arm (elbow to wrist) or leg (knee to ankle) are regarded as excessive. The tattooing/branding on your (arm/leg/hand) has been evaluated and determined to be outside the bounds of current Coast Guard Tattooing and Branding policy based on excessive coverage. Because these tattoos/brands predate the establishment of this more restrictive policy in 2005, you shall be grandfathered in (this/these) specific area(s) for the remainder of your Coast Guard career provided you do not have a break in Coast Guard service other than care for temporary separation programs. However, any further tattooing/branding in (this/these) already excessive area(s) would be a violation of Coast Guard policy, and could result in administrative action. This Administrative Remark shall remain in your record to document this waiver and to preclude the need for future/repeated evaluations. A description of the waived area(s) is as follows:

Left Arm (60% coverage): Eagle with name "Jack", oriental graphics covering area from wrist to mid-forearm, Harley-Davidson logo, ship's wheel.

Right Leg (80% coverage): Serpentine design from ankle to knee

Right Hand: Fouled anchors between thumb and forefinger

A. B. SEA, CAPT, USCG
Commanding Officer

(DATE): I acknowledge the above entry, have been afforded the opportunity to review Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A, and fully understand the action required.

J. P. JONES

Sample CG-3307 for Tattoo/Branding Content

Entry Type: Performance and Discipline (P&D – 35)

Reference: Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A

Responsible Level: Unit

Entry:

(DATE): In accordance with COMDTINST 1000.1A, tattoos/brands anywhere on the body that are contrary to good order and discipline, are sexually explicit, or promote racism, discrimination, indecency, extremist philosophies, or lawlessness, are prohibited. Such tattoos/brands/markings are a basis for separation from the service. The tattoo/brand on your (arm/leg/back/etc.) has been evaluated and determined to be outside the bounds of current Coast Guard Tattoo/Brand policy based on its offensive content. There is no provision for waiving such tattoos/brands. I encourage you to seek competent medical advice regarding the removal or alteration of the tattoos/brands identified below. You have until _____ to seek such advice and to make a decision. Should you choose not to remove or alter the tattoo/brand, I will begin separation action. A description of the disqualifying tattoo/brand is as follows:

Left Arm: Naked mermaid.

Right Leg: Confederate Flag

A. B. SEA, CAPT, USCG
Commanding Officer

(DATE): I acknowledge the above entry, have been afforded the opportunity to review Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A, and fully understand the action required.

J. P. JONES

Sample CG-3307 for Tattoo/Brand on Head, Neck, Face, or Hands

Entry Type: Performance and Discipline (P&D – 36)

Reference: Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A

Responsible Level: Unit

Entry:

(DATE): In accordance with COMDTINST 1000.1A, tattoos/brands located anywhere on the head, face, neck above the t-shirt line, or hands below the wrist are prohibited, and are a basis for separation from the service. The tattooing/branding on your _____ (neck/face/hand) has been evaluated and determined to be outside the bounds of current Coast Guard Tattooing and Branding policy. I encourage you to seek competent medical advice regarding the removal of the tattoo(s). You have until _____ to seek such advice and to make a decision. Should you choose not to remove the tattoo/brand, I will begin separation action. A description of the disqualifying tattoos/brands is as follows:

Left Hand: Ship's anchor between thumb and forefinger.

Left Neck: Chinese symbol

A. B. SEA, CAPT, USCG
Commanding Officer

(DATE): I acknowledge the above entry, have been afforded the opportunity to review Tattoo, Body Marking, Body Piercing and Mutilation Policy, COMDTINST 1000.1A, and fully understand the action required.

J. P. JONES

TATTOO SCREENING FORM, CG-6052 (1-05)

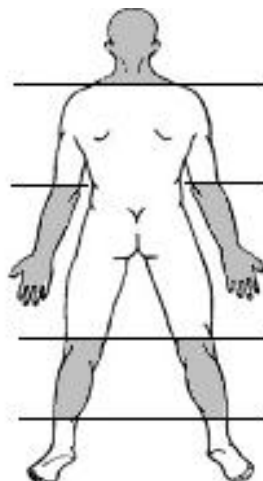
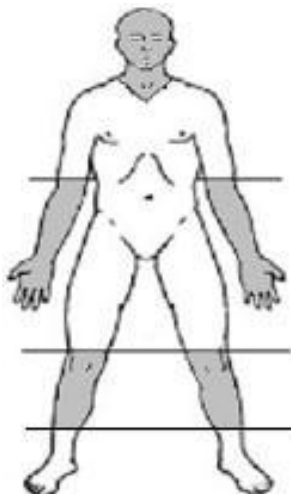
Privacy Act Statement

AUTHORITY: Collection of this information is authorized per 10 USC, sections 503,505,12102, and Executive Order 9397.

PRINCIPAL PURPOSE: Information collected will be used to assist in the qualification process.

ROUTINE USES: Blanket routine use of disclosures as described in CI M1020.6 (series) and CI 1000.1A.

DISCLOSURE: Voluntary, however, failure to provide the information may delay the enlistment process or initiate action for discharge.

**APPLICANT/MEMBER NAME:****SSN:**

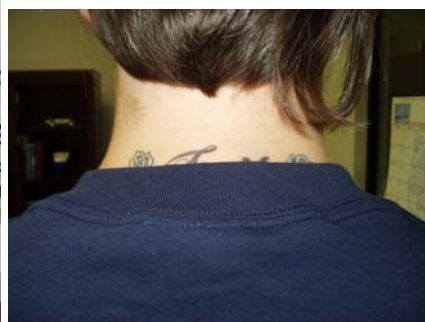
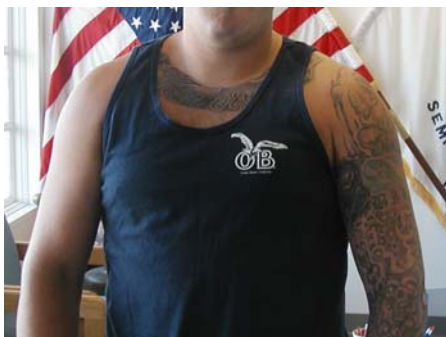
Mark all tattoos, brands, body piercings, intentional scarrings, or mutilations on the above diagram with a number and describe below.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

APPROVED: <input type="checkbox"/>	UNIT:	SIGNATURE:	DATE:
DISAPPROVED: <input type="checkbox"/>			

SAMPLES OF DISQUALIFYING MARKINGS

Head & Neck



Hands



Inappropriate Content



Excessive Tattooing (More than 25% of exposed area)

